

Friday 8th December 2017

## Universalization, the ISU Report and Cost Implications of Programme Options

The 2017 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) continued on Thursday with the consideration of mandated reports and a briefing on the financial implications of various options for possible inter-sessional work. The rest of the day consisted of further meetings behind closed doors.

### **Universalization report and the ISU annual report**

The Chair of the MSP, Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill of India, introduced his report on universalization by welcoming the accession of Samoa during 2017. He noted that there were few conventions that are 40 years old still being actively adhered to. Fiji and the United Arab Emirates noted regional events that they had hosted. The European Union highlighted its sponsorship for regional workshops and noted that the four countries that had joined the BWC in the past two years had all attended EU-sponsored events. Finland noted they were sponsoring an MSP participant from Tanzania as a universalization activity.

The Chief of the ISU, Daniel Feakes, introduced the ISU report. He updated some of the data, noting that to 4 December there had now been 74 Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) returns, the second highest ever number. He encouraged States Parties to ensure their 'national contact point' information was up to date. He thanked Germany and Ireland for their financial assistance to allow updating of the CBM electronic platform and of the Article X database system respectively.

The universalization report this year appears as document BWC/MSP/2017/3 and 3/Add.1 and the ISU annual report is in document BWC/MSP/2017/4.

### **Finances for an inter-sessional work programme**

During the discussion on financial issues on Wednesday there was a request for a briefing on the costs of possible options for an inter-sessional work programme. ISU Chief Daniel Feakes gave a presentation on Thursday on such costs, emphasising that the figures being expressed were provisional.

The BWC budget for 2017 is US\$208,000 for conference services costs and US\$901,000 for non-conference services, including the ISU. This gives a total budget of \$1.1 million. The conference costs include the use of meeting rooms and the support services to run them, the interpretation services for discussions in the rooms and document production costs including translation, formatting and printing.

The provisional conference services costings for the current situation plus a 5-day work programme were given as US\$1.37 million, with those for the current situation plus a 10-day work programme were US\$1.6 million. By comparison, the BWC budget for 2016, which included the Eighth Review Conference, was US\$1.97 million. The BWC budget for the year 2000 – the last full year of Ad Hoc Group negotiations – was US\$2.9 million in then-year prices (i.e., not accounting for inflation since).

In summarizing the situation, Ambassador Gill noted that the expenditures for all of the possible proposed work programmes fall well within the historical range of expenditures on the BWC. It is worth noting that the budget for 2017 was an anomaly as it

was the first year since the establishment of the ISU that there was no work programme other than an MSP. This naturally meant that the costs for 2017 have been lower.

### **Inter-sessional programme discussions**

Following the close of the morning plenary, States Parties met in private (in Salle VII in the morning and XXI in the afternoon). During the morning the topics of assistance & protection and national implementation were discussed.

At the beginning of the afternoon session, the Chair introduced a new non-paper on the possible structure of the inter-sessional work programme. As with the structure non-paper on Wednesday, such a document is never anticipated to allow a instant consensus to form but is aimed to focus discussion. Some time later in the afternoon a revised annex on possible content, in terms of subject matter, in an inter-sessional programme was circulated. This was slimmed down from the fairly raw compilation put forward the day before.

The production of new non-papers in this style indicates progress, but as in all other multilateral negotiations ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’.

At the end of the day, a very short formal plenary was convened to brief those who were not in the smaller room. Ambassador Gill said that progress had been made in some ‘difficult areas’, and that common ground had appeared on possible sub-items for consideration in a possible inter-sessional process grouped within four areas – ‘International Cooperation’, ‘Science and Technology’, ‘National Implementation’ and ‘Assistance, Support and Preparedness’. He indicated that there were still a number of issues that needed further work, that he would be carrying out consultations into the evening, and that Friday morning’s work would start with a continuation of the private meeting. The short plenaries at the end of the day to brief those not able to be involved in the private meetings have been welcomed as increasing inclusivity within the process.

Discussions in the corridors with delegates involved in the private meeting had indicated that the sticking points that remained were those that might have been expected. It is difficult to comment on them here as such comment could potentially disturb the process. As of Friday morning, the quantity of work required to achieve consensus is considerably less than at the equivalent time during the Eighth Review Conference.

Prospects are difficult to evaluate at this point. In other negotiations experienced by this author there have been situations when things have looked more optimistic at this time but consensus wasn’t reached. More importantly, there have been numerous times when the situation has looked far less optimistic at this stage but a solution was found.

### **Side Events**

There were two breakfast events on Thursday: one on ‘Aligning International Needs Assessments and National Action Plans in Africa in the Post-Ebola Biological Field’ convened by Italy, the European Union and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI); and the other on ‘Strengthening the UNSGM: Moving Towards a Global Trusted Network of UNSGM Designated Laboratories’ convened by Switzerland and Germany.

There were three events at lunchtime: one on ‘Implementation in Action: IAP’s Experience in Engaging Scientists in Biosecurity’ convened by the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP); one on ‘The European Union’s Continued Support for Strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention’ convened by the EU; and the other on ‘How Real is the Biological Threat: A Global Perspective’ convened by Emergent BioSolutions.

***Please note: there will be a sixth report produced next week covering the final day of the Review Conference that will be e-mailed out and placed on the websites below.***

*This is the fifth report from the BWC MSP, being held from 4 to 8 December 2017 in Geneva. These reports are prepared by Richard Guthrie of CBW Events on behalf of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). They are available via <<http://www.cbw-events.org.uk/bwc-rep.html>> and <<http://www.bwpp.org/reports.html>> [please note there have been technical difficulties updating the BWPP website]. An email subscription link is available on each page. The author can be contacted via <[richard@cbw-events.org.uk](mailto:richard@cbw-events.org.uk)>.*